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BRIEFS AND COMMENTS

IRAN: Post-Assassination Tensions

Iranian Government and religious leaders fear for their lives following the assassination of Ayatollah Motahari on Tuesday. The identity of the killers is still unknown, but if they turn out to be backers of the Shah many officials will believe the US was involved.

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Forghan, the group that claimed responsibility for the killing of Motahari and of former armed forces Chief of Staff Qarani late last month, reportedly plans to kill other senior officials. Its targets include Foreign Minister Yazdi, Deputy Prime Minister Entezam, Radio-TV Director Ghotbzadeh, and Islamic economic theorist Bani Sadr, as well as all members of the Islamic Revolutionary Council.

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The identity of Forghan members remains a secret, and as long as it remains so many officials will believe that backers of the Shah, aided or encouraged by the US, are responsible. If the group is proved to have links to the Shah, the already strong Iranian suspicions of US intentions and actions will heighten. The Embassy could again become a target for violence.

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Iranian suspicions and anxieties about a rightwing counterrevolution have been strengthened by the continuing attacks--reportedly by relatives of executed officials--on the pro-Khomeini Revolutionary Guards. There are also rumors that former political and military figures are plotting coups and were involved in recent disturbances by minority groups.

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SOMALIA-USSR: Bid to Improve Relations

Somalia President Siad has informed selected members of the diplomatic corps, including the US, Saudi, and Egyptian Ambassadors, that he is seeking limited improvement in relations with the USSR. He has made it clear, however, that he does not contemplate a return to the patron-client relationship of the past. Siad's latest maneuvers are almost certainly designed to put additional pressure on Western and conservative Arab states to be more responsive to his repeated requests for political and military support.

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Despite the low state of Somali-Soviet relations, Siad has carefully avoided foreclosing his Soviet option. In addition to maintaining normal diplomatic relations, he has used East and West European Communist intermediaries to facilitate a continuing dialogue with Moscow. Siad has now decided to take this process a step further by agreeing to a longstanding request for a limited expansion of the Soviet Embassy staff in Mogadiscio.

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Siad, in a conversation with US Ambassador Peterson, justified this concession by implying that he is under heavy pressure from colleagues on the Central Committee to adopt a more conciliatory posture toward Moscow in light of the West's failure to respond to Somalia's security needs. He said committee members are increasingly concerned over Somalia's growing isolation, the seriousness of its dispute with traditional Arab benefactors over the implementation of sanctions against Egypt, and the Soviet-inspired threat to Somali security posed by Ethiopian and Somali dissident forces. Despite Siad's assertions, his suspicions of the Soviets and the deep anti-Soviet feeling on the part of the Somali military establishment would probably preclude significantly closer ties any time soon.

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The Soviets, for their part, will probably expand their embassy to the new limit set by Siad, but given their equities in Ethiopia they are unlikely to agree to any major improvement in relations unless Mogadiscio renounces its irredentist claims in the Ogaden and ends its support of insurgents there.

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SOMALIA-KENYA: Reconciliation Efforts

//Saudi Arabia has reportedly arranged a meeting between Kenyan President Moi and Somali President Siad late next month in either Jidda or Mogadiscio to ease longstanding tensions. The Saudis have worked for more than a year to reconcile the two moderate leaders.

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//Somalia's irredentist desires toward northeast Kenya are the weakest of its territorial claims, and Siad probably believes little would be lost in holding talks with the Kenyans or even in offering "private assurances." Siad probably calculates that:

- The US and other potential Western military suppliers would favor the move.*
- Any improvement in Somali-Kenyan relations would lead to a corresponding reduction in Kenya's military ties to Ethiopia, which are largely a reaction to Mogadiscio's claims.*
- The Saudis may be more understanding of his reluctance to break with Egypt, another important source of aid.//*

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//Moi has also been under pressure to meet with Siad, but Kenyan distrust of the Somali President has blocked previous efforts to arrange a meeting. The Kenyans now may be motivated in part by concern over Tanzanian involvement in Uganda and the present unsettled conditions on their borders.//

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//The meeting, if it occurs, is not likely to lead to any improvement in relations. Moi's distrust of Somali motivations and his close alliance with Ethiopia, reaffirmed in January, make it unlikely he will accept Somali assurances of territorial respect if they are not made public. Siad has refused to take such a step for fear of its internal repercussions.//

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SOUTH AFRICA: Policy Toward Rhodesia

Foreign Minister Botha told a press conference early this week that South Africa's decision whether to recognize the Rhodesian Government that emerges from the recent elections will depend on its viability and effectiveness--not on whether it can end the war. South Africa's basic aim, in fact, is to encourage the establishment of a stable, majority-ruled government in Rhodesia with which it can cooperate. The South African military, which appears to be gaining a stronger voice in Prime Minister Botha's government, may press for positive South African support of the regime in Salisbury.

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A friendly government in Rhodesia is essential to South Africa's overall design for an eventual regional economic and military alliance in the region. South Africa's renewed interest in such a scheme reflects its increasing isolation from and defiance of the outside world in the wake of growing internal discontent over the recent government scandal and international pressures for independence for Namibia.

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South Africa will doubtless step up essential military and economic support that it has long provided to Rhodesia. Having come this far, South Africa is willing to gamble that the new government in Salisbury will develop into a stable regime with which the South Africans can work over the long term. Moreover, if the Rhodesian regime were to gain international acceptance, it could, in South Africa's view, be used as a model for a similar solution to the problem of Namibian independence.

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Should the new government not take hold, South Africa has extensive contingency plans to evacuate whites from Rhodesia, but the South Africans do not appear to have any other plans for direct military intervention. This situation could eventually change, particularly because the military is willing to go to greater lengths to save the Salisbury regime.

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BRAZIL: Continuing Labor Problems

The regime's takeover Wednesday of the striking teachers' union in Brasilia is a measured but clear warning to other strikers in several cities that there are limits to the government's tolerance. [REDACTED]

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This is the second time since his inauguration in mid-March that President Figueiredo has ordered such a move. Earlier, he ousted the leaders of three influential metalworkers' unions in Sao Paulo after talks over wages and other issues broke down. Although a federally mandated cooling-off period is now in effect for this labor problem, the metalworkers might yet return to the picket lines. In the meantime, however, their leaders have been allowed to exercise de facto control of the three unions. [REDACTED]

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Sporadic strikes began a year ago, but the pace has picked up recently in response to the rising cost of living and the advent of greater official tolerance of dissent. Thus far, the government has clearly preferred a conciliatory approach and has allowed a great many of the strikes to be settled on terms favorable to the workers. Officials are concerned, however, that the situation could get out of hand and pose a severe threat to the regime's anti-inflation drive and even to its overall authority. [REDACTED]

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USSR-IRAN: Economic Aid Talks

25X1 TASS reports that Semyon Skachkov, the chief of the Soviet foreign aid program, will arrive in Tehran today for talks on economic aid. Skachkov's visit to Iran, the first by a Soviet official since the culmination of the revolution in February, indicates the Soviet desire to resolve some of the economic problems that have developed since the fall of the Shah. The Soviets are concerned about disruptions of natural gas deliveries to the USSR and about joint aid projects such as the Soviet-built steel mill at Isfahan.

ISRAEL: West Bank Unrest

25X1 Israeli authorities yesterday closed indefinitely the Palestinian Bir Zayt University near Ram Allah on the West Bank, following two days of clashes there between Palestinian students and Israelis from a nearby Jewish settlement. The unrest apparently originated Wednesday when ultranationalist Gush Emunim members fired at Arab students protesting Israeli settlement activity. Bir Zayt students have a long history of political activism and have been in the forefront of Palestinian protests against the Israeli occupation. The university was closed twice previously following clashes between students and Israeli soldiers.

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SPECIAL ANALYSIS

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RHODESIA: A Muzorewa Government

Despite Bishop Muzorewa's impressive victory in the election last month--his party won 67 percent of the popular vote--his hold on the new government to be installed about a month from now is likely to be tenuous. The Bishop's immediate task is to set up a government that must include his political opponents, white and black, according to the constitution that governed the elections. The fragile balance that will exist between Muzorewa and the whites will restrict the new government's already limited ability to reduce or end the fighting, reverse Rhodesia's four-year economic decline, and secure international recognition.

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//Muzorewa must accept whatever candidates the other parties propose for cabinet positions, although he will decide how to allocate the portfolios.

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He recognizes that several important posts--most likely internal affairs, finance, and justice--must be given to whites if he is to retain their confidence in the new government.//

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//Reverend Ndabaningi Sithole's recent threats not to participate in the new government because of alleged voting irregularities probably should not be taken seriously. His party will have 12 of the 100 seats in the House and two cabinet positions, although these will probably be minor appointments. Nevertheless, his position is sufficient to make him an attractive coalition partner for the whites in any parliamentary test of strength with the Bishop. Moreover, Sithole controls an estimated 2,000 armed auxiliaries, and so Muzorewa cannot afford to treat him cavalierly.

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Ndebele Chief Ndiweni has promised to cooperate with the new government, but he and Chief Chirau--who failed to gain any parliamentary seats--have indicated that they would continue to push for an all-parties conference as the only real solution to the Rhodesian problem. Chirau has observed that the new government may not be "acceptable" to the outside world--probably a ploy to get an important post in the new government. [REDACTED]

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//Leaders of the white Rhodesian Front party and Muzorewa's party met several times before the election to discuss the future distribution of power between their parties. Officials of both parties agree that the Rhodesian Front must continue to play a prominent role in order to retain white confidence, prevent an economic collapse, and maintain the loyalty and efficiency of the security forces. The whites may not be pleased with the cabinet posts Muzorewa plans to offer them but, whatever the composition of the government, they will continue to control the bureaucracy and thus determine the day-to-day governing of the country.// [REDACTED]

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//Officials of Muzorewa's party also recently met with the heads of Rhodesia's five largest economic associations to work out future economic policy. White business leaders expect that once in power Muzorewa will be under strong pressure to appoint more blacks to responsible positions, and they have already suggested a number of personnel changes in the committees that oversee the Reserve Bank, Air Rhodesia, and the Electricity Supply Commission.// [REDACTED]

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25X1 //Muzorewa recognizes that the long-term viability of a black-led government will depend on its success in winning the support of blacks in the countryside. He hopes to accomplish this by improving their living conditions and offering new incentives to black farmers. Muzorewa also plans to institute a limited land reform program. He will discourage nationalization for its own sake or the splitting up of white-owned farms into small, uneconomical plots to avoid provoking a white exodus that would lead to economic collapse.// [REDACTED]

Muzorewa hopes to strengthen his government's control over the countryside by expanding the size and role of the auxiliary force now at his command. The auxiliaries--some 8,000 men including many ex-guerrillas who

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have defected to the transitional government--were used to provide security in rural black areas during the election, and the Bishop apparently wants to use them more in a political role. The whites, however, want to integrate them into the security forces, and their status could become a point of contention. [REDACTED]

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Muzorewa's strong showing in the election significantly lessens the chances that he will seek an accommodation with the guerrilla leaders. Although the Bishop maintains that guerrilla leaders Nkomo and Mugabe are welcome in Salisbury, his government will continue--and possibly escalate--raids on guerrilla targets in neighboring countries. [REDACTED]

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//Muzorewa has offered a general amnesty to the guerrillas, but expects that most defectors will come from the Zimbabwe African National Union because most ZANU guerrillas belong to his ethnic group. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] Muzorewa probably will wait until his government is firmly established--which could take several months--before considering making any new approaches to ZANU. Personal and tribal differences between Muzorewa and Zimbabwe African People's Union leader Nkomo and white antagonism toward Nkomo rule out any prospects for a deal with ZAPU for the time being.// [REDACTED]


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